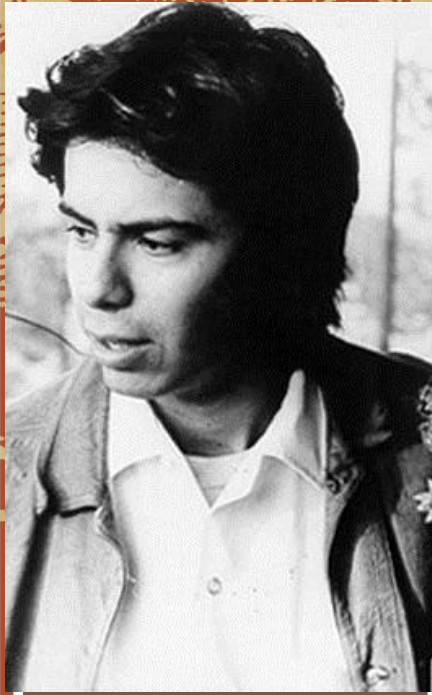


Gary Soto...A Latino Poet



*“After Tonight” by **Gary Soto** from *The Elements of San Joaquin**

A Hispanic Poet writing
about what matter most to
us all... living our everyday
life with passion.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



Gary Soto

Name: Gary Soto

Place of birth: Fresno, California

Born: April 12, 1952, age 61

What he writes about: Gary Soto writes about issues important to Mexican-Americans. He writes about what life is like growing up in a barrio struggling to make ends meet.

Why I chose this poem: I agree that life is fragile. Soto seems to understand that we can never know what will happen next. He writes about topics anyone can understand. I relate to his poems.

“After Tonight” by Gary Soto

Because there are avenues
Of traffic lights, a phone book
Of brothers and lawyers,
Why should you think your purse
Will not be tugged from your arm
Or the screen door
Will remain latched
Against the man
Who hugs and kisses
His pillow
In the corridor of loneliness?

There is a window of light
A sprinkler turning
As the earth turns,
And you do not think of the hills
And of the splintered wrists it takes
To give you
The heat rising toward the ceiling.

You expect your daughter
To be at the door any moment
And your husband to arrive
With the night
That is suddenly all around.
You expect the stove to burst

A collar of fire
When you want it,
The siamese cats
To move against your legs, purring.

But remember this:
Because blood revolves from one lung
to the next,
Why think it will
After tonight?

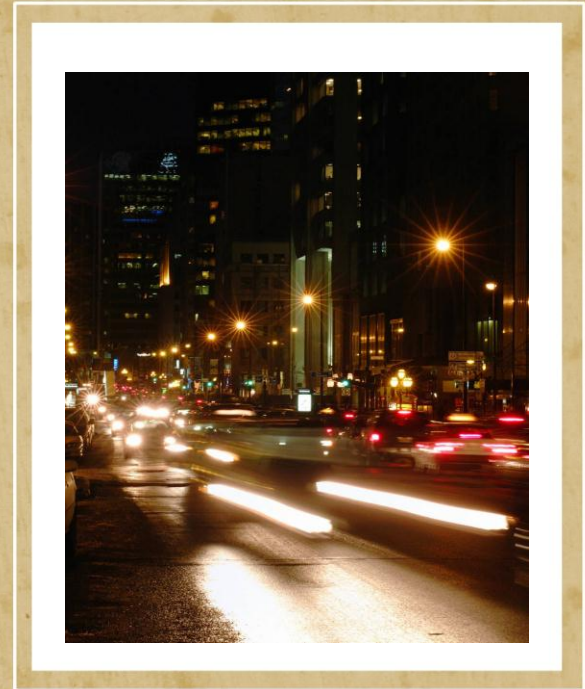
“After Tonight” by Gary Soto: Summary

This poem is set in a dangerous city scene where people are anxious about what will happen next. The speaker tries to explain that just because there are phone books with numbers to call for help and lawyers to seek help from, that does not mean you are safe. The speaker mentions someone who lives in a corridor of loneliness, someone who would hurt another out of his own pain. The poem also describes a woman waiting on her loved ones to return home. In the city this speaker describes, the people are not always in control. Things can happen to them that are not expected. The speaker ends by saying we can not expect that just because we are alive today, that we are guaranteed to be living tomorrow.

FORM AND STRUCTURE

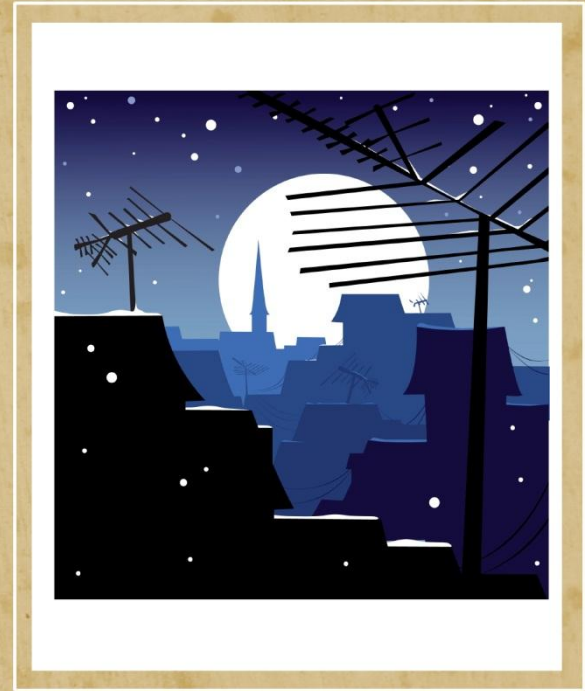
The poem, “After Tonight” is a five stanza poem. Each stanza is a single, long sentence that almost requires one to hold one’s breath while reading. The first stanza is a question posed to the reader by the speaker. Four of the stanzas use the second person pronouns, you and your. By referring to the reader with these words, the poem seems more personal, like a conversation.

.....



FORM AND STRUCTURE

The poem is unrhymed with no particular rhyme scheme or consistent rhythm. These characteristics give the poem a casual, informal tone, which fits the topic of the poem, the harshness and unexpected nature of life.



THE POEM'S DEVICES

Imagery: It is a poem about the danger of the night and the fragile nature of life. Some of the images include traffic lights, lawyers, and avenues, all of which are images from a city.

More imagery: “collar of fire” and “stove burst” are two images of danger.

Metaphor: “Collar of fire” is also a metaphor, comparing a ring of fire to a collar.” Corridor of loneliness is another metaphor comparing a long hall to the emotion of being lonely.



DANGER!

THE POEM'S THEME AND MEANING

In “After Tonight,” the speaker refers to a series of unexpected turns that one’s life might take. These are turns no one hopes for, such as a loved one not coming home, or a mugging, or attack. The poem is set in a city, giving one the impression that the speaker sees life in the city as dangerous and on-the-edge.



THE POEM'S THEME AND MEANING

The final stanza ends as the poem began, with a question, almost a warning of danger:

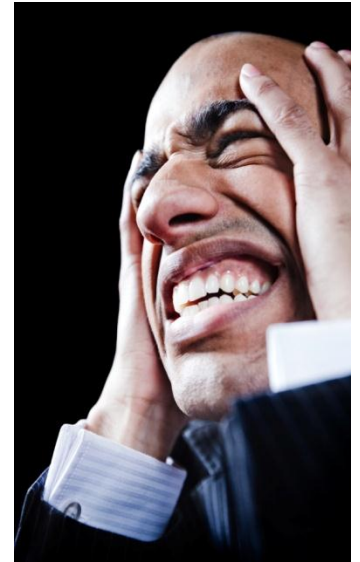
**“But remember this / Because blood
revolves from one lung to the next, /
Why think it will /After tonight?”**

(Soto)

The speaker almost seems to be talking about the fragile nature of life.

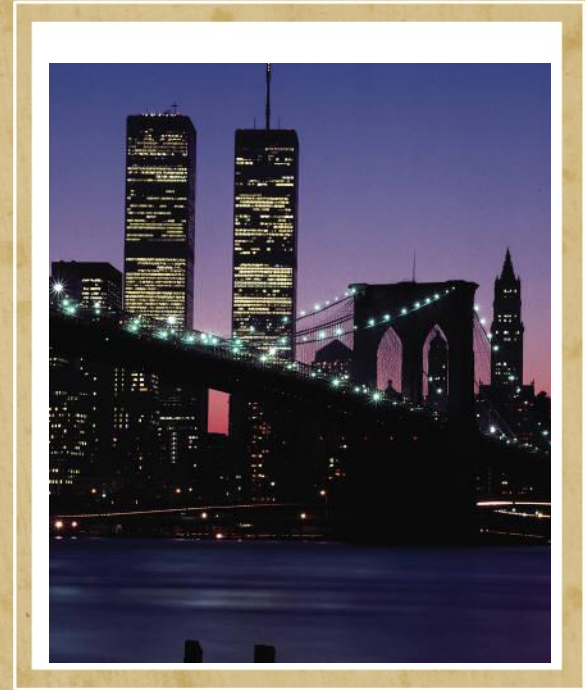
THE POEM'S THEME AND MEANING

He seems to be saying, just because one is alive now, does not mean someone is guaranteed that next breath. He warns the reader of the dangerous turns one's life can take in an instant. Such warnings are realistic, as life is fragile. Without warning, one's life can quickly take a disastrous turn.



tone and mood

The poet's tone toward the subject matter is one of danger and anxiousness. The title is "After Tonight." The poet almost seems to be saying one never knows what will happen after tonight. The night is described as a dangerous time and in a dangerous place, the dark city. The mood is somewhat eerie and nervous, as though one is scared of what might happen next.



Another Poem by Gary Soto that I like

“Worry at the End of the Month”

This poem is about the changes to a man's life that are going to take place because he is about to become a father.



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